



**NORTHEAST INDIA:
BIRDS AND MAMMALS OF EAGLENEST,
NAMERI AND KAZIRANGA**

2 - 15 MARCH 2019



Temminck's Tragopan is one of our targets on this trip.

This northeastern India tour visits some spectacular scenery in the eastern Himalayas and the floodplain of the mighty (and extremely lengthy) Brahmaputra River long before it joins the River Ganges in Bangladesh. The mountains and floodplains here are two of the most biologically diverse places in India, and our tour will focus on these areas. After our arrival at New Delhi we will take a domestic flight to Guwahati, the largest city in Assam, situated on the bank of the Brahmaputra. From here we will head into the undisturbed wilderness of the Himalayan foothills of Nameri National Park. This area protects numerous species, and we will look for special birds such as **White-winged Duck**, **Ibisbill**, and **Greater Adjutant** here. We will then spend almost a week birding within and around the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh, one of the best-known and highly-regarded mountain birding sites in the whole of Asia. The scenery, forests, and birding here are all spectacular, and we will be looking for some amazing birds, such as **Temminck's** and **Blyth's Tragopans**, **Blood Pheasant**, **Snow Partridge**, **Himalayan Monal**, **Spotted Elachura**, **Bugun Liocichla**, **Himalayan Cutia**, and **Fire-tailed Myzornis**, along with plenty more laughingthrushes, parrotbills, rosefinches, barwings, and related species. We will finally, and gradually, descend back down to the Assamese plains of the Brahmaputra, where we will continue our adventure, looking for some difficult yet highly-prized species in and around the wondrous Kaziranga National Park, such as **Bengal Florican**, **Greater Adjutant**, **Blue-naped Pitta**, **Indian Grassbird**, and **Swamp Francolin**. Once we've finished here we will head back to Guwahati for our flight to New Delhi, where the tour will conclude.

The tour will also focus on finding some of the major mammals of the region, such as **Indian Rhinoceros** (the only place in the world where you can see this species reliably), **Asian Elephant**, **Barasingha** (Swamp Deer), **Gaur**, **Wild Water Buffalo**, **Indian Leopard** (the subspecies in India is *P. p. fusca*), and **Western Hoolock Gibbon**, along with plenty of more common and widespread species. With extreme luck we may even find **Arunachal Macaque**, **Red Panda**, or **Bengal Tiger**, either one sure to be yet another highlight.

You could combine this tour with our exciting **Birding Tour India: The South – Western Ghats and Nilgiri Endemics** (13th – 26th January 2019) and/or our very popular **Birding Tour India: The North – Tigers and Birds** tour (28th January – 13th February 2019) followed by our **Birding Tour India: The Northwest – Lions and Desert Birding in Gujarat** (14th – 27th February 2019). We can also easily offer you extensions at each location if you'd like to prolong your stay in this wonderful and vibrant country.

Itinerary (14 days/13 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in New Delhi

After a late-afternoon arrival at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi you will be transferred to a nearby hotel for a welcome-dinner.

Overnight: New Delhi

Day 2. New Delhi to Guwahati, transfer to and afternoon birding at Nameri National Park

Leaving New Delhi in the morning we will fly to Guwahati, the capital of the state of Assam, arriving there around noon. During the afternoon we will go birding in Nameri National Park

(also known as Nameri Tiger Reserve). Nameri is a gorgeous, undulating wilderness area in the foothills of the eastern Himalayas. A large proportion of the national park area consists of swamp forest interspersed with areas of open grassland and split up by many river tributaries. Nameri is one of the best places in the world to find the rare, highly-elusive, and Endangered (IUCN) **White-winged Duck**, and this will be one of our major objectives during our time here. There are, however, numerous other great species possible, such as **Greater Adjutant, Green Cochoa, Long-tailed Broadbill, Great and Wreathed Hornbills, Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Pied Falconet, Pied Harrier, Oriental Hobby, White-browed Piculet, Grey-bellied Tesia, Pale-chinned Blue Flycatcher, and Black-backed Forktail**, and we will make sure to try and find as many of these as possible. We will also be back here the following day, and after our mountain visit (day 11), so we will have several opportunities for the birds listed above.

Overnight: Nameri National Park

Day 3. Nameri National Park to Dirang

This morning will be spent birding around Nameri National Park, looking for the above species and more. We will likely take a boat ride along the river here, where we could find **Ibisbill, Small Pratincole, River Tern, River Lapwing, Great Stone-curlew, Sand Lark, Striated Grassbird**, and the huge **Crested Kingfisher**.

After the birding session in Nameri we will head toward Dirang. This part of India is one of the most diverse in the country, due to the huge elevation gain of the Eastern Himalayas in a relatively small area (e.g. sea-level to 7,000m in about 150km). We will pass through some gorgeous scenery and a wide range of habitats (stopping along the way) as we make our way up to the 1,500m elevation zone. Over the course of our journey and the rest of the afternoon we may find **Rufous-bellied Eagle, Northern Goshawk, Pied Falconet, Hill Partridge, Golden-throated Barbet, Grey-chinned Minivet, Blue-fronted Robin, Little Forktail, Golden Bush Robin, Rufous-breasted Bush Robin, Purple Cochoa, Scaly Laughingthrush, Coral-billed Scimitar Babbler, Slender-billed Scimitar Babbler, Himalayan Cutia, Black-headed Shrike-babbler, Green Shrike-babbler, White-naped Yuhina, White-breasted and Pale-billed Parrotbills, and Sultan Tit**.

Overnight: Dirang

Day 4. Birding the Sela Pass and Sangthi valley, transfer to Mandala Birding Lodge

A very exciting day will see us visiting a wide-range of habitats and elevations. We will spend time in and around pine, alder, and chestnut forests and check out alpine meadows, scrub, cultivated areas (e.g. rice paddies), and riverine habitats.

An early start in the morning will see us heading up to around 4,200m on the famous Sela Pass – one of the highest drivable mountain passes in all of the Himalayas. Here in the alpine meadows and barren areas we will focus on some very special, highly-sought, and seriously-stunning montane species such as **Blood Pheasant, Snow Partridge, Himalayan Monal, Himalayan Vulture, Snow Pigeon, Grandala, Hodgson's Redstart, Alpine Accentor, Tibetan Serin, Plain Mountain Finch, Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch, Spotted Laughingthrush, Rufous-breasted Bush Robin, and White-browed Tit-warbler**. It is sure to be a memorable morning's birding with several species of finches, grosbeaks, and thrushes also possible.

During the afternoon we will visit the Sangthi valley at an altitude of around 1,500-1,600m, where we will look for several equally exciting species, such as the unique **Ibisbill**, the secretive **Black-tailed Crake**, and the uncommon **Long-billed Plover**. Other interesting species in the

valley at this time of year may include **Rosy Pipit, Olive-backed Pipit, Yellow-breasted Greenfinch, Brown Dipper**, the stunning **White-capped Redstart, Little Forktail**, and **Wallcreeper**.

There is a good chance that the 'bird of the trip' may be found today, because the quality of birds on offer is so high! We will end the day by reaching our next accommodation at Mandala Birding Lodge, our base for the next two nights.

Overnight: Mandala Birding Lodge

Day 5. Mandala

We will spend the full day birding around Mandala. Target species are plentiful and may include one of the world's best-looking birds, **Temminck's Tragopan**. It is scarce here, but we will certainly be putting a great deal of effort into trying to find it. There will be plenty of other species in the forests here, such as **Blanford's Rosefinch, Bhutan, Black-faced, and Spotted Laughingthrushes, Gould's Shortwing, Fire-tailed Myzornis, White-collared and Grey-winged Blackbirds, Grey-headed Bullfinch, Crimson-breasted Woodpecker, Rufous-breasted and Maroon-backed Accentors, Hodgson's and White-throated Redstarts, Golden-naped Finch, Rufous-fronted Bushtit, Grey Crested Tit, and Spotted Nutcracker. Ward's Trogon** is also a scarce possibility here. We are sure to have another memorable day.

Overnight: Mandala Birding Lodge

Day 6. Mandala to Lama Camp

After breakfast we will bird our way between Mandala and Lama Camp, where we will spend the night at a fully-serviced camp. Lama Camp is on the periphery of the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, a phenomenal area and one of the best birding locations in India, and in fact in all of Asia. We will have a total of five days in and around this exciting sanctuary, which will allow us to fully explore the wide altitudinal range and resultant habitats and birdlife on offer here.

There is a wide range of species possible during the day, there is some overlap with the previous and following days, but there are plenty of new and exciting birds too. Some of the most thrilling birds may include **Blyth's and Temminck's Tragopans** (two very impressive, but scarce birds!) along with **Himalayan Bluetail, Blyth's Shrike-Babbler, Brown-throated and Golden-breasted Fulvettas, Himalayan Cutia, Stripe-throated Yuhina, Rusty-fronted and Streak-throated Barwings, Himalayan Thrush, Rufous-chinned and Grey-sided Laughingthrushes, Fulvous and Black-throated Parrotbills, Slender-billed and Streak-breasted Scimitar Babblers, and Green-tailed Sunbird**.

Overnight: Lama Camp

Days 7 - 9. Lama Camp to Bompu Birding Camp

We will leave Lama Camp and bird our way to Bompu Birding Camp at 1940m, where we will spend the next three nights at a fully-serviced camp inside the wonderful Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary. Due to the good access here we will be able to enjoy three full days' birding across a wide elevational range to maximize our chances for the most exciting species and mixed-flocks/bird-waves on offer here. Barwings, yuhinas, laughingthrushes, and related species are likely to be evident, such as the recently discovered **Bugun Liocichla**, the more well-known **Red-faced Liocichla, Himalayan Cutia, Fire-tailed Myzornis, Blue-winged Minla, Red-billed Leiothrix, Silver-eared Mesia, Rusty-fronted and Streak-throated Barwings, Long-tailed and Beautiful Sibias, White-naped, Whiskered, and Rufous-vented Yuhinas, Golden-**

breasted Fulvetta, and **Blue-winged, Bhutan**, and **Black-faced Laughingthrushes**. **Beautiful Nuthatches** and **Rusty-flanked Treecreepers**, along with **Yellow-cheeked** and **Sultan Tits**, are likely to be in the bird-waves. A range of parrotbills too could be on offer, with **Black-headed, Pale-billed** and **Brown Parrotbills** all possible. Some color and further quality might be provided by **Ward's** and **Red-headed Trogons**, **Yellow-billed Blue Magpie**, **Rufous-necked Hornbill**, and **Scarlet Finch**.

By spending a few days here we will be able to concentrate our efforts on some of the more secretive and skulking, but highly rewarding species such as **Spotted Elachura** (a recent elevation to monotypic family status), **Gould's Shortwing**, **Grey Peacock-Pheasant**, **Chestnut-breasted Partridge**, **Hodgson's Frogmouth**, **Blyth's Kingfisher**, **Brown Wood Owl**, **Speckled Wood Pigeon**, **Darjeeling Woodpecker**, **Black-faced Warbler**, **Chestnut-headed Tesia**, **White-browed Bush Robin**, **Golden Bush Robin**, **Long-tailed** and **Himalayan Thrushes**, and another possible 'bird of the trip', the shy and difficult, but totally worth-the-effort **Blyth's Tragopan**. Two mammals we will be looking for here are the very rare (both Endangered (IUCN) **Red Panda** and **Arunachal Macaque**; with luck we may find one or even both of these in the forests.

Overnight: Bompu Birding Camp (three nights)

Day 10. Bompu Birding Camp to Lama Camp

We will spend the day birding our way back from Bompu Birding Camp to Lama Camp, looking for the birds already listed above.

Overnight: Lama Camp

Day 11. Lama Camp to Nameri National Park

Today we will start our descent from the mountains to the Assamese plains. It's a long way, so we will break the journey up over a couple of days to make it more enjoyable and to allow us time to stop for wildlife along the way.

Leaving Lama Camp we will drive back to Nameri National Park for the night, where we will have another chance to try and find the rare and Endangered (IUCN) **White-winged Duck** and **Ibisbill**. Many other species in the area could include those listed for days 2 and 3 as well as the likes of **Collared Falconet**, **Pin-tailed** and **Grey-fronted Green Pigeons**, **Oriental Dollarbird**, and **Daurian Redstart**.

Overnight: Nameri National Park

Day 12. Nameri National Park to Kaziranga National Park

We will have an early start from Nameri today and will travel across to the famous and huge Kaziranga National Park in central Assam, crossing the mighty and equally famous Brahmaputra River. Indeed, the national park is the largest undisturbed area of the river's floodplain and a spectacular sight in its own right, stacked full of jaw-dropping wildlife. This is one area of India that is a 'must-visit' for any birder and wildlife lover. After our arrival we will spend the afternoon in the national park, where we will try and get a head start on finding the many incredible birds and wildlife listed for day 13.

Overnight: Kaziranga National Park

Day 13. Kaziranga National Park

Some very special birds are possible today, and we will primarily look for **Bengal Florican, Greater Adjutant, Blue-naped Pitta, Indian Grassbird, Swamp Francolin, Spot-billed Pelican, and Pallas's Fish Eagle**. However, while looking for the above species (and the mammals referenced below) there are plenty of other birds we will look for as we make our way through various open grasslands and wetlands, such as **Black-necked, Painted, Woolly-necked, and Black Storks, Asian Openbill, Cotton Pygmy Goose, Bar-headed Goose, Grey-headed Lapwing, Alexandrine and Red-breasted Parakeets, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Zitting Cisticola, Chestnut Munia, Red Avadavat, Bengal Bush Lark, Finn's, Baya, Streaked, and Black-breasted Weavers, and Spot-winged Starling**.

The more scrubby and wooded areas within and around the national park hold **Siberian Rubythroat, Common Green Magpie, Kalij Pheasant, Red Junglefowl, Common Emerald Dove, White-rumped Shama, Rufous, Grey-headed, and Fulvous-breasted Woodpeckers, Speckled Piculet, White-browed Scimitar Babbler, Greater Necklaced, Lesser Necklaced, and Rufous-necked Laughingthrushes, Maroon Oriole, Blue-eared and Great Barbets, Verditer Flycatcher, and Smoky Warbler**.

A fine suite of mammals also occurs in Kaziranga National Park, and we will look for **Indian Rhinoceros, Asian Elephant, Gaur, Wild Water Buffalo, Barasingha (Swamp Deer), Sloth Bear, and Western Hoolock Gibbon**. With some luck we may even come across the rare and secretive **Bengal Tiger, Indian Leopard, Clouded Leopard, Jungle Cat, Fishing Cat, or Leopard Cat** while here. The rivers here are also home to the Critically Endangered (IUCN) **Gharial and Ganges River Dolphin**, two other highly-sought species in a long list of potential non-avian highlights. Our visit in and around this national park is sure to be a very interesting bird-and-wildlife-packed time.

Overnight: Kaziranga National Park

Day 14. Kaziranga National Park to Guwahati and New Delhi, departure

Depending on our flight time from Guwahati to New Delhi there may be some time for a bit more early-morning, pre-breakfast birding and wildlife watching in the Kaziranga area. We will transfer to Guwahati in the morning and fly back to New Delhi, arriving there in the mid-afternoon in time for a late-evening flight out of New Delhi.

If you would rather not fly back home on this day we can organize an additional night in New Delhi for your flight the following day, or we can arrange a birding or cultural tour extension around New Delhi or another part of India. Just let us know what you'd like to do and see, maybe an extension to visit the Taj Mahal, or Ranthambhore National Park to look for the majestic Bengal Tiger, or the Chambal River to look for Ganges River Dolphin? There are lots of choices on offer.

Duration:	14 days
Date:	2 nd – 15 th March 2019
Limit:	4-8
Start:	New Delhi
End:	New Delhi

Price: US\$5510 per person sharing
Single supplement: US\$820

Price includes:

Domestic flight New Delhi to Guwahati

Domestic flight Guwahati to New Delhi

All accommodation (as described above – please note that the accommodation in northeastern India is basic to very basic, often with shared bathroom/toilets in permanent camp sites away from the cities)

Meals (from lunch on day 1 until breakfast on day 14)

Drinking water – two bottles of mineral water per day per person from our tour vehicle (if taken from a hotel/camp this will be at your own cost)

Expert tour leader and local bird/wildlife guide fees

National park/birdwatching reserve entrance fees and jeep safaris

All ground transport and tolls while on tour, including airport pick-up and drop-off

Protected Area Permit

Rafting at Nameri

Price excludes:

Flights to/from New Delhi

Visa

Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, internet access, phone calls, etc.

Optional tours (e.g. monument entrance fees)

Soft/alcoholic drinks

Camera (still/video) permits

Personal travel insurance

Gratuities

Please note that the itinerary above cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide to the one advertised due to tour scheduling.